

USING THE RELAY SYSTEM FOR TELEPHONE/TTY CALLS

In the past, telephone communication with deaf people was difficult if both parties didn't have TTYs. A TTY is a teletypewriter, sometimes called a TDD, telecommunication device for the deaf or a text telephone. Think about the numerous calls that you make each day to contact friends, get information on prices, make appointments. Ten years ago, most deaf people had to ask a friend to interpret the call for them, as most hearing people didn't have TTYs. Now, many deaf adults use FAX machines, e-mail, and text pagers to communicate over distance. Another service is available through the state, and is called the Telecommunications Relay service. Suppose I am hearing and I don't have a TTY, but I want to call my deaf friend. As of October 1, 2001, I can call 711 in any state to reach the relay operator, known as a communication assistant. The communication assistant would answer, and I would tell him or her what number I'd like to call. The 711 call is free; if my friend's number is long distance, I would be billed for that. The operator will call my friend; when my friend answers the phone and types, "Hello...", the operator reads it on her TTY, and voices my friend's message to me. I, in turn, talk directly to my friend, "Hi, Joan. This is ..." not, "Please ask Joan...". When I finish my message, I say, "Go ahead" or "GA", so the operator knows I'm finished. It's like saying, "Over" on a ham or police radio. We carry on with our conversation, with the operator typing everything I say, my friend reading the text and typing back to me, the operator reading it from her TTY and voicing back to me. When my friend is finished, and ready to say goodbye, she will type, "GA or SK", meaning "go ahead or stop key." The operator usually will say, "Go ahead or sign off", meaning, "If you have nothing further, say goodbye now."

Two options when using a telephone relay service are voice carry-over (VCO) and hearing carry-over (HCO). Voice carry-over allows a person with a hearing loss but who can speak to speak directly to the other party and then read the response typed by the communication assistant. Hearing carry-over allows a person with a speech impairment to hear the other party and type their response back to their friend through the relay assistant.

- **Call 711 in any state to get relay service**
- **National Relay Numbers for interstate/international use:**
 - **Sprint –(800)877-8973 (V, T)**
 - **MCI - (800)947-8642 (V)**
 - **(800)688-4889 (T)**
 - **AT&T – (800)855-2881 (V)**
 - **(800)855-2880 (T)**
 - **T = text telephone, TTY/TDD**
 - **V = voice**